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CEDAR CREEK.

POPULAR HISTORY REFUTED.

A PAPER READ BEFORE
THE IOWA COMMANDERY
MILITARY ORDER OF THE LOYAL LEGION
OF THE UNITED STATES.

BY
CAPTAIN E. D. HADLEY,
DES MOINES, IOWA.

DES MOINES :
THE KENYON PRESS.
1898.

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THE BATTLE OF CEDAR CREEK.

POPULAR HISTORY REFUTED.

BY CAPTAIN E. D. HADLEY.

Cedar Creek in the East, and Shiloh in the West, have common features peculiar to themselves.

Cedar Creek opened with a surprise ; so did Shiloh. At Cedar Creek the surprised troops were said to be asleep ; so at Shiloh. Cedar Creek opened with a great disaster ; so did Shiloh. Cedar Creek ended with a glorious victory for the Union army ; so did Shiloh. Cedar Creek was won with a powerful reënforcement ; so was Shiloh ; but Cedar Creek's reënforcement was of one man ; Shiloh's of many thousands. Cedar Creek has furnished innumerable discussions and conflicts of testimony ; so has Shiloh. Cedar Creek, some say, would have been won without the reënforcement of Phil Sheridan ; Shiloh, some say, would have been won without the reënforcement of General Buell's army.

Which battle, Cedar Creek or Shiloh, has been the most fruitful subject for historical comment, magazine and newspaper articles and camp-fire eloquence, no one can determine.

The pens of a legion of historians have been busied with the battle of Cedar Creek, fought on the 19th day of October, 1864.

They have written from the standpoints of Union and Secession, of soldier and civilian, of the private and the officer. Veterans of every rank have tried their hands, from the high private to General Grant himself.

They have differed much and there are differences apparently irreconcilable. There are fundamental differences and differ-

ences that are immaterial. Errors concerning some matters of importance have become so deeply rooted in the popular mind as to be, perhaps, ineradicable.

And yet there are certain salient features of this battle about which there exists no controversy ; such as the fact of a disaster in the morning, the retrograde movement of the army, the "halt" and "about face," the arrival of Sheridan, the advance of our lines in the afternoon and the complete defeat of the Rebels before night-fall.

But the means and the manner of the accomplishment of these events, the degree of disaster, the quality of the soldierly conduct of our different corps, the personal direction and the influence of certain general officers, have been the subjects of interminable disputations.

It may be plausibly said that these disputed points are of minor importance since the main and essential points are conceded and the result is a matter of history. But while the good name of men is important and the renown of their corps and divisions is, in part, their own and will become that of their descendants, and these things are involved in these disputed points, they become matters of major importance.

It is no part of the design of this paper to add to the great number of accounts of this battle. But it seems necessary to the intelligible discussion of testimony that is to follow that a brief outline of the situation of the armies and of the battle be given before proceeding further.

The Union army was composed of the Nineteenth Corps, forming the center, with its front line behind breastworks, on the easterly side of Cedar Creek, which follows a southerly course, the breastworks conforming to the general direction of the moderately high bluffs on whose brows they were constructed ; the Eighth Corps, or Army of West Virginia, to the left and in advance of the Nineteenth Corps, its First Division one and one-sixth miles distant, likewise on bluffs overlooking the creek,

behind breastworks, but its other division one-half mile to the rear and one-fourth mile from the left of the Nineteenth Corps, without breastworks, also on bluffs or high knolls with ravines intervening between its position and the position of its First Division and the position of the Nineteenth Corps, all of which ground consisted of openings and timber tracts, there being timber in front of part of the Eighth Corps line; the Sixth Corps on the right and rear of the Nineteenth Corps a full half mile distant; three divisions of cavalry, two beyond the right of the infantry and one far to the left rear, except one brigade at a ford of the Shenandoah two miles northeast of the First Division of the Eighth Corps — with numerous batteries of artillery.

The Union position was thus on the eastern bank of Cedar Creek, just above its confluence with the Shenandoah River, whose general course was northeast and which, just opposite our left, closely skirts the steep northerly base of the Massanutten Mountain.

The Confederate Army was to the southwest, five and a half miles distant, at Fisher's Hill, also on the northwesterly side of the Shenandoah River, and consisted of five divisions of infantry, a good force of cavalry and artillery. There exist no exact returns of the strength of these armies for that day, but without doubt the Union Army was considerably the stronger.

The Confederate commander was Jubal A. Early, lieutenant-general by the grace of the *de facto* Confederate States government.

General Sheridan, the commander of the Union Army, was at Winchester, in rear of his army, having returned thus far from a conference with Secretary Stanton, at Washington, assured by a courier from General Wright, of the Sixth Corps, in command of the Union Army by right of seniority, that all was quiet at the front, on the eighteenth, in the evening, with a

reconnoissance ordered for the morning of the nineteenth, the eventful day.

These were the positions and the conditions of the armies the night before the battle.

But while Sheridan slept the sound sleep of a tired horseman at Winchester, Early and his forces were beginning the execution of a daring piece of strategy, whose object was the surprise and destruction of the Union Army, a result which would have given Early sweet revenge for the galling defeats, three in number, he had suffered at the hands of Sheridan and his army within thirty days.

Selecting Gordon's, Ramseur's and Pegram's Divisions, and a brigade of cavalry, under command of Gordon, Early dispatched them as a flanking column, immediately after dark. Crossing the Shenandoah, stealing along by tortuous paths so narrow that they could proceed only in single file, Gordon's command, at half past four in the morning, crossed the river a second time, putting to flight, with a few shots, the cavalry picket at the ford, and formed in the rear and on the left of the Union line, where, in a five minutes charge, they could reach the Second Division of the Eighth Corps.

Starting at one o'clock in the morning, Kershaw's Rebel Division advanced directly toward the Union center by the valley pike, deflecting to the right and halting on the Strasburg side of the creek, threatening the Union left in its front.

Wharton's Rebel Division was halted on the pike, one thousand yards in front of the Union center.

The "pike" was the broad macadamized road "from Winchester town," running many miles up the valley and passing through the Union position at the left of the Nineteenth Corps.

Kershaw's Division, accompanied by Early himself, arrived in sight of the Union camp at 3:30 o'clock, and could see the tents of their unsuspecting foes on the opposite hills, bathed in the light of the hunter's moon.

As one historian has said, "The situation was intensely dramatic. There crouched Kershaw's Division of Confederates under cover, ready to spring upon Crook's sleeping camps in front. Wharton's Division was watching for an opportunity to wedge itself between Crook's right and the Nineteenth Corps, while Gordon's three divisions crept cautiously and in silence along in the shadow of the mountain to gain our army's rear and strike the fatal blow ; and there lay in their tents the Union Army, totally unconscious that an active and stealthy foe was close at hand, in the actual execution of a well laid plan for its destruction."

At half past four, Kershaw's Division, at the concerted signal of Gordon's fire upon the cavalry pickets at the ford of the Shenandoah, crossed the creek and rapidly formed and advanced against the breastworks of Crook's First Division, which they reached, if Early's statement is correct, at precisely five o'clock. Although various officers of the Eighth Corps who were with their commands in this First Division, and many soldier writers who heard the volleys of this attack from their various places in different parts of the army, set the hour of this attack at various points of time, from 4:30 to 5:40, it is probable that Early would have the most accurate knowledge, as he was directing an intricate military operation, and this was the initial assault of several inter-dependent assaults, and was the move he was waiting for.

The accounts of the final advance of the Union forces in the afternoon state it to have occurred at points of time more variant than the accounts of this morning's assault. These variances of time are unimportant.

This assault, made nearly an hour before sunrise, in a thick fog, in darkness so great that the flashes of the guns were seen by men "standing to arms" in the Nineteenth Corps, resulted in the utter discomfiture of this division of the Eighth Corps, the hasty withdrawal of these regiments with their organiza-

tion somewhat shattered, but with many regiments able to take new positions in order, with the troops of the Nineteenth Corps to face the enemy until that corps was compelled to withdraw to the rear.

Several guns were lost here and several hundred men were captured.

Kershaw's lines, reformed, followed quickly toward the left flank of the Nineteenth Corps, pursued and pursuers moving over very broken ground.

To meet the oncoming conquerors of Thoburn's Division, the Nineteenth Corps was extended to the left by pushing a brigade and a half across the pike. Hayes' division and the fractional division of Kitching of the Eighth were placed in line beyond the Nineteenth, parallel to and at a short distance from the pike, but east of it. Meanwhile Gordon's three divisions are sweeping westward, and unexpectedly swoop down upon the left of this line and crush it in. Here and now, according to General Wright's, and General Crook's and Colonel Hayes' official reports, before the Rebel assault became pressing, or their fire severe, an unreasoning and uncontrollable panic seized the men of this Second Division, and, in spite of commands and entreaties, the majority of the men left the lines in disorderly retreat, some, however, remaining around the regimental colors and fighting valiantly so long that the Rebel lines were held back until the headquarters trains were, for the most part, withdrawn in safety. If this panic was unexplainable, it had its counterpart in the conduct of Kershaw's and Ramseur's Rebel Divisions, when, during the Union advance in the afternoon, according to Early, upon the discomfiture of Gordon's Division on the Rebel left, the men in the other two divisions named, broke from the ranks without orders and were seized with a panic in which, for the most part, they refused to obey orders and rushed to the rear and ruined all.

The left of the Nineteenth Corps here suffered severely and was forced back. The men of both corps had cause for a panicky feeling if they realized that the lines of Gordon's, Kershaw's and Wharton's advance were all converging upon the position they were holding, front, flank and rear, with crushing force.

General Wright states that he ordered the Sixth Corps to form farther back, and directed General Emory to extricate his Nineteenth Corps from its untenable position and to form on the right of the Sixth.

The report of General Wright is valueless to what orders he gave from this time onward to the coming of General Sheridan, or as to the movements of the army during a retrogression which now ensued and resulted finally in a new line established about one and a quarter miles north of Middletown, from which line an advance was made in the afternoon.

But from the reports of corps and division commanders it is to be gathered that a new line was formed, as the Nineteenth Corps retired from its works, extending from the pike westerly across Meadow Run toward Cedar Creek, just north of Bell Grove House, with the Sixth Corps on the left and the Nineteenth Corps on the right, and with some of the Eighth Corps between, and that some Rebel assaults were repulsed here, but that this position soon became untenable on account of the out-flanking of the left by Gordon's forces at the pike, and a retrograde movement was made in reasonable order, the Second Division of the Sixth Corps taking position on an eminence west of Middletown, where they repulsed at least two determined charges, while the other two divisions of the Sixth Corps and the Nineteenth Corps were in an irregular line to the right, supported by a division of cavalry with its artillery.

Up to about this time a thick fog had covered all things, and partially hidden the combatants from their foes and from friends as well. About this time the fog was dispelled.

It was now well toward nine o'clock. Withdrawing farther, a little later the two corps were irregularly aligned along the Old Forge Road, as follows : Cavalry, Nineteenth Corps, First, Third and Second Divisions of the Sixth Corps.

About ten o'clock, the retrograde was resumed, bearing toward the pike and the cavalry, with the exception of three regiments, was transferred to the left, taking position on the left or east side of the pike north of Middletown.

The Second Division of the Sixth Corps took position on the right of the pike with a considerable fraction of the Eighth Corps to its right, which was soon joined by the Second Brigade of the Third Division of the Sixth.

There were here, then, on a line from which no further retrograde was made, substantially two divisions of cavalry, numbering, as some say, 7,000 or more, and probably 5,000 infantry and some guns, a force capable of doing some hard fighting and of taking care of themselves against all the Rebels in the field. They were not seriously assaulted here.

The story of the way in which the First Division and one-half of the Third Division of the Sixth Corps became lost (not used offensively) during the last movement and wandered a thousand yards through the woods beyond the selected line occupied by the Second Division, while the Nineteenth Corps was farther to the rear and farther from the pike, is exceedingly interesting and clears up a mystery of long standing as to how those troops got to the rear so far without being pressed by the enemy, but time is wanting for its presentation. The explanation is altogether honorable to those troops.

It is not the design of this article to go into the details of the movements of the various parts of the infantry force from the time of the retirement of the Nineteenth Corps from its position at the pike to the time when Sheridan arrived and found the forces to the north of Middletown. Indeed, to analyze the reports of corps, division and brigade commanders and corre-

late their various movements so as to present a comprehensive scheme that will show their relations to each other at different times after they left the Bell Grove line until they reached the Old Forge Road, is an almost superhuman task. The country was in places heavily wooded, corps were unable to see each other though near at hand, and belts of timber intervened between brigades and divided divisions. Neighbors could not see each other for fog and woodland.

But if credence is to be given to the reports of corps, division and brigade commanders, the movement of the Nineteenth Corps to the Bell Grove line was by no means deliberate and organization was, in some degree, lost, as must be inferred from the loss of eleven guns. The narratives of individuals indicate that to them there was more of chaos than of order. The reports of officers indicate that the cohesion of brigades and divisions was maintained or recovered, if temporarily lost.

Richard N. Irwin, who was an officer on General Emory's staff, says, in his history of the Nineteenth Corps, at this point in the battle, "In the stress, the men held well to their colors, and although there may and must have been many that fell out, not a brigade or regiment lost its organization for a moment." These are brave words.

It is equally clear that the movements of the First and Third Divisions of the Sixth Corps from the Bell Grove line were not in perfect order, as is indicated by the loss of six guns, the last guns lost that day.

Further, if we put credence in the official reports mentioned and narratives prepared by officers who participated in this part of the action, one must conclude that the movements from the line last named and the line opposite Middletown, where the fierce charges of the Rebels were repulsed, and from the Old Forge Road, were made in pursuance of a design well conceived and worked out in the mind of the general in command to take a new position where, with the grip of Early on our left flank

shaken off, the battle could be fought out with a fair chance of success; and we must also conclude that the force of the Rebel attack was spent in the charges repulsed by Getty on the west of Middletown about 8:30 A. M., and that the further retrograde movement was made deliberately and unmolested, except by a comparatively harmless artillery fire.

We may further conclude that the transfer of the cavalry to the left flank at ten o'clock, where it threatened to envelop Early's right flank, compelling him to send his freshest division to the right to protect that flank from the Union cavalry, was one of the wisest tactical moves of the day, and paralyzed Early's advance completely.

We may also conclude from these reports that General Keifer, in command, after the morning, of the Third Division of the Sixth Corps, was correct in stating in his report that owing to the movements of the morning the divisions had been compelled to fight independently of each other.

But if we conclude that General Merritt, of the First Cavalry Division, was correct in saying, after speaking of the discomfiture of the Eighth and Nineteenth Corps, that "Wright's Infantry (meaning Sixth Corps), which was farther removed from the point of attack, fared somewhat better but did not offer more than a spasmodic resistance," we must also conclude that the Rebel attacks were spasmodic also, because they were resisted as often as they assaulted after the Bell Grove line was formed.

We may also conclude from the same evidence that Sheridan in his report, dated February 3, 1866, did not speak by the record when he said, "This (attack on Crook) was followed by a direct attack upon our front, and the result was that the whole army was driven back in confusion to a point about one mile north of Middletown, a very large portion of the infantry not even preserving a company organization."

In his Memoirs, published in 1888, Sheridan uses much milder language, saying that "The whole Union Army was

driven from its camps in more or less disorder, and though much disjointed resistance was displayed, it may be said that no systematic stand was made until Getty's Division, aided by Torbert's cavalry, which Wright had ordered to the left early in the action, took up the ground where, on arriving from Winchester, I found them."

The severe fighting of the morning was over before Sheridan left Winchester, and he cannot testify to what occurred before half past ten o'clock, of his own knowledge, and, therefore, the statements of men of intelligence who were in the battle and in a position to know, must prevail over statements based on hearsay, as are all accounts deduced from the statements of others, however high their rank may have been.

The statements in the *Memoirs* are evidently quite conservative and fair.

How Sheridan ordered the whole line to advance about four o'clock is history known to all America, and a hundred histories have told of the glorious victory for the Union with which the day ended. This matter will be left with the historians, by the writer, and attention will now be directed to a matter which has long affected the soldierly reputation of the men of one corps of the army engaged in this battle.

For a third of a century the Eighth Corps has rested under the suspicion that the totality of the surprise on the left was due to lack of vigilance, or neglect of proper precautions on the part of the corps commander, or division commander, or officer of the day, or to lack of watchfulness or of wakefulness on the picket line, or gullibility of pickets, by which they fell victims to the stratagems of the enemy, or to an unwarrantable feeling of security in that corps, or to neglect of phenomena presenting themselves to the pickets in the night, but which were not investigated, or to an illy performed reconnoissance from that corps on the preceding day, or to some undefined

unsoldierly quality that had suddenly possessed some of the best soldiers of the Union armies.

General Wright devotes one-fifth of his report of the battle, dated November 27, 1865, to an explanation of, and apology for, the surprise of that morning, and tries to trace it to the extreme feeling of security resulting from the reconnoissance from this corps of the day before, which, he intimates, was not carried to a proper distance to the front, the reconnoitering party reporting that the Rebel Army had retreated up the valley. But such a defense could not exonerate; it could only confirm existing suspicions.

The suspicion that all was not right on the picket line of the Eighth Corps has led to romantic and weird stories of pickets silently seized after stealthy and cat-like approaches in the dark, of the relief of pickets by Rebels in Union garb, of mysterious consciousness of invisible human presence beyond the lines, and the muffled tramping of marching hosts near the pickets in the impenetrable gloom, all of which may be passed by as idle imaginings, in view of the fact that the night was so bright that at 3:30 Early and Kershaw could see the Union camps in the moonlight. Besides, at the hour of the alleged mysterious sounds the Rebels were not within a mile of the Union pickets. What happened to the pickets will be told in another place.

The fact that Early succeeded in his purpose of surprising the First Division cannot be seriously questioned, but the extent of that surprise, and the manner of it, and how it was met, and its real consequences are worthy of investigation.

But it is not amiss to commence this part of the discussion with a reference to the completeness of the agreement of historical writers in the statement that the men of the Eighth Corps were caught in their beds and captured in their blankets, or compelled to flee undressed, or half dressed, a swarm of harmless fugitives, less dangerous than a disorganized mob. In all researches made, the writer has failed to find one historian who

does not revel in the idea that the Eighth Corps was asleep when the Rebels went in over the breastworks of the First Division.

George E. Pond, "Campaigns of the Civil War," Shenandoah Valley, page 224, says: "Long before sunrise a ringing volley of musketry startled the men of Thoburn's Division from their sleep, and as they came bewildered from their tents to learn the cause, over every part of their parapet, through the darkness and the fog, rushed Kershaw's Infantry. The position was swept in an instant, with its seven guns, from which not a shot had been fired."

"Lossing's Civil War," volume 3, page 369, says: "At early morning twilight the order of attack was given, when the rattle of musketry on right, left, and rear, and the ringing battle shout summoned the Nationals from repose to arms. But before they could take position in the trenches, the assailants who had captured the pickets were there. In the space of fifteen minutes Crook's Corps was broken into fragments and sent flying in wild disorder upon the other corps."

Pollard's "Lost Cause" (Rebel), page 559, says: "The surprise was complete. The Eighth Corps was unable to form a line of battle, and in five minutes was a herd of fugitives. Many of the men awoke only to find themselves prisoners."

Charles Carlton Coffin, in "Freedom Triumphant," page 49, says: "It was five o'clock. Gordon had crossed the Shenandoah, seized the Union pickets, formed his brigades by Mr. Bowman's house and had crossed the fields to the breastworks thrown up by Thoburn's Division. They swarmed over it with exultant yells. The soldiers in their tents thus suddenly awakened found themselves prisoners. Some half dressed, seized their guns. Before the regiments of Thoburn's Division could form, the Confederates were upon them."

"Harper's History of the Great Rebellion," page 712, says: "The five divisions had broken on front, flank and rear through

the sleeping camps. In fifteen minutes it was perfectly routed and streaming back in confusion upon the Nineteenth, its guns captured and turned upon the fugitives."

American Supplement to Encyclopedia Britannica, article, Cedar Creek, says: "His (Early's) advance columns lay within six hundred yards of the sleeping Federal troops. He prepared a feint attack upon the Union right and the left was simultaneously awakened by the rush and shouts of the Confederates."

Greeley's "American Conflict," page 612, volume 2, contains the following remarkable statements, which are given because they are in line with the others quoted with regard to a sleeping camp, because they contain the "fairy story" about "a rustling of underbrush and a sound of multitudinous tramping," because they seem to intend to charge General Crook with neglect of proper precautions, and because some of them are positively absurd and untrue to facts and all show of what stuff popular histories are made:

"At 2 A. M., the pickets of the Fifth New York Heavy Artillery (Kitching's Division) heard a rustling of underbrush and a sound of multitudinous tramping, and two posts were relieved and sent into camp with the report. General Crook thereupon ordered that a good lookout be kept, but sent out no reconnoissance, even the gap in the front line caused by detailing regiments for picket duty were not filled, and when the crash came the muskets of many of the men were not loaded. There was some suspicion and uneasiness in Crook's command, but no serious preparations. * * * The Rebels disdain- ing to notice the picket fire, were themselves in the trenches before our astonished soldiers could occupy them in effective force. * * * In fifteen minutes, the Army of West Virginia was a flying mob. One battalion of its picket line lost one hundred killed and wounded and seven hundred prisoners."

The Fifth New York Heavy Artillery did not belong to Kitching's Division, but to Thoburn's. How could a "multitudinous

tramping" of Rebels be heard by Thoburn's pickets at a time when none of the Rebels were within a mile, perhaps two miles, of the pickets? How could a reconnoissance be sent out in the night? How could "suspicion and uneasiness" arise in a camp of sleeping men a little after two o'clock at night? How could one battalion out on picket lose eight hundred men? Why send posts into camp with a report rather than some officer?

The whole extract is a tissue of absurdities and misinformation made up of idle rumors, unprofessional guess work and unimportant facts, but, like the other historical quotations, it has gone on for many years disseminating worthless and worse than worthless ideas of the condition of Crook's command that foggy October morning and of the result of the surprise. The whole number of prisoners lost by the Eighth Corps that day was less than five hundred and forty. The official report offers no evidence of the matter of the pickets in which General Crook's name is involved. Was it a myth?

A sweetly poetic version is given by Nicolay and Hay, "Abraham Lincoln," volume 9, page 317: "His (Kershaw's) division, veiled by the mist of the morning, poured like phantoms over Crook's intrenchments, capturing seven guns and turning them on their flying owners, and the troops in camp suddenly aroused out of sleep. The surprise was perfect."

Passing from these civilian historians and their rehash of hearsay testimony and rumors, attention is called to the statements of certain military writers who were not of the Eighth Corps or nearer the Eighth that morning than the camp of the Nineteenth and Sixth Corps, and whose testimony is also of the nature of hearsay.

Richard N. Irwin, of General Emory's staff, in his "History of the Nineteenth Corps," page 418, says, speaking of Kershaw's attack upon Thoburn's Division: "In an instant, before a single shot could be fired, before the muskets could be taken from the stacks, before the cannoneers could reach their pieces,

Kershaw's men, with loud and continuous yells, swarmed over the parapet in Thoburn's front, seized the guns and sent his half-clad soldiers flying to the rear."

General Wesley Merritt, of the First Cavalry Division, in "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War," volume 4, page 516, says: "The surprise was complete. Crook's camp, and afterward Emory's, were attacked in flank and rear, and the men and officers driven from their beds, many of them not having time to hurry on their clothes except as they retreated, half awake and terror stricken."

No other writer has been found accusing the Nineteenth Corps of being also asleep. In fact, *they* were "standing to arms" before the assault upon Crook was made.

In "Vermont in the Civil War," volume 1, page 544, G. C. Benedict says: " * * (continuing) when Kershaw's solid lines, springing over the parapets of Thoburn's Division, woke his men with a rattling volley. Before the latter could go into line the Rebels were in their camps. The tents were dragged from over the heads of Thoburn's men and many of them were captured as they lay in their blankets. * * * Thoburn was killed and five hundred of his men captured, and seven pieces, taken without firing a shot, were turned by Kershaw on the terrified fugitives."

In "Three Years in the Sixth Corps," Geo. T. Stevens, surgeon of the Seventy-seventh New York Volunteers, page 421, says: "Toward these (Crook's lines) they (Kershaw's forces) hastened, and so complete was the surprise that the men of the Eighth Corps were, for the most part, quietly sleeping in their tents. The few who got into the breastworks were subjected to a fierce fire in the flank, and were soon forced to abandon the line."

Captain J. Franklin Fitts, One Hundred and Fourteenth New York, First Brigade, First Division, Nineteenth Corps, in an article in the *Galaxy*, volume 1, page 534, says: "Sleeping

near Long Meadow Run, I was aroused by a tremendous outburst of musketry from the far away left. The volley was one crashing fire into the slumbering Eighth Corps."

Quoting now from general officers in high command, we find a different version of affairs. General Horatio G. Wright, who was in command of the army that morning, but who was not within a mile of the spot, says in his report: "The surprise was complete, for the pickets did not fire a shot, and the first indication of the enemy's presence was a volley into the main line, when the men were at reveille roll call, without arms."

We learn from this report that the General did not credit the story of the firing into the tents of the sleeping men. But he alone introduces the idea of reveille roll call. General Wright does not agree with the officers of Thoburn's Division in any particular as to details. As participants in the affair, these officers are entitled to greater credence.

General Crook, commander of the Eighth Corps, in his report dated November 7, 1864, page 365 of part I, volume 43, Rebellion Records, who was no nearer to this part of his lines that morning than the position of the Second Division, omits the idea of slumbering camps, but says candidly and justly: "At about 4:30 A. M., another force of the enemy crossed the creek in front of the First Division, and soon after the enemy came rushing in solid lines of battle, without skirmishers, on my pickets, coming to the works with those of the pickets they had not captured, in overwhelming numbers, entered that portion of the works not occupied by our troops, and soon were on the flanks and in the rear of the First Division and the two batteries, compelling them either to retreat or be captured."

The histories and popular writings by military gentlemen would have lacked startling rhetorical effects if the writers had faithfully studied Crook's report.

Having given ample proof from so many historical writers, civil and military, to show that for one-third of a century

writers of popular literature have permitted their powerful influence to fasten a species of obloquy upon the brave men of the Eighth Corps, both officers and rank and file, making them serve as a foil to draw attention away from the shortcomings, if any there were, of the rest of the army, the writer proposes to ask you to go, in imagination, into the camp of Thoburn's Division at about four o'clock of that eventful morning and with him observe the state of affairs, and whether at five o'clock the men were asleep in their tents and were awakened by a "ringing volley" fired into their camps, and their artillery all captured without firing a shot.

A careful study of the official reports of the officers of this division will enable us to do this, and avoid that reliance on hearsay which has characterized the writers quoted above.

We find here encamped in rear of the works, which faced Cedar Creek to the south, seven regiments and one battalion of infantry, constituting the First and Third Brigades of the division, with two six-gun batteries and one four-gun battery.

The First Brigade consists of the Thirty-fourth Massachusetts Regiment,

Fifth New York Heavy Artillery Battalion,
One Hundred and Sixteenth Ohio Regiment,
One Hundred and Twenty-third Ohio Regiment.

The Third Brigade consists of the

Fifty-fourth Pennsylvania Regiment,
Tenth West Virginia Regiment,
Eleventh West Virginia Regiment,
Fifteenth West Virginia Regiment.

The Artillery consists of

First Ohio Light Battery L, four guns,
First Pennsylvania Light Battery D, six guns,
Fifth United States Battery B, six guns.

The division is commanded by Colonel Joseph Thoburn, one brigade by a colonel, the other by a lieutenant-colonel, one regi-

ment by a colonel, two regiments by lieutenant-colonels, one by a major, three regiments and the battalion by captains. The chief of artillery is a captain.

It is dark yet, a fog has enveloped everything since Early and Kershaw were looking at the Union camps at 3:30, in the moonlight. Objects are not distinguishable at a distance of more than thirty paces. There is a strip of woods in front of the left and some woods in the rear. The Pennsylvania Battery is entrenched near the left of the line. The United States Battery is on the right and the Ohio Battery of four guns farther to the right, commanding the Cedar Creek bridge at the pike. There is a ravine or hollow in rear of the camp running down to Cedar Creek and then a hill to the north on a part of which the Second Division is located. The battalion of the Fifth New York Heavy Artillery is on picket down by Cedar Creek.

Some of the officers are astir, as Major Withers of the Tenth West Virginia, Lieutenant-Colonel Wildes of the One Hundred and Sixteenth Ohio, and Captain Dupont, chief of artillery, and probably others.

They hear picket firing ; some say on the right ; some say on the left ; same say in front.

Some say it is four o'clock ; some say it is about half past four, and one says it is between five and six. Some say "early in the morning." They all mean the same thing and just put the time in their reports as it seemed to them when their reports were written, within a week's time.

Skirmishing with a foe by the pickets in the dark is heard ; the division officer of the day reports the advance of a heavy force from the direction of Cedar Creek, in front.

Captain Dupont orders the reveille sounded. There is a quick seizing of weapons, brief commands, hasty forming of companies and regiments and manning of breastworks and the cannoneers stand by their guns.

Colonel T. M. Harris, who commanded the Third Brigade, tells the story in his report as follows :

"At about 4:30 A. M. the enemy advanced in heavy force against the works of the First Division, pushing in rapidly whatever of the picket line he failed to capture. The division having been aroused by the firing along the picket line and subsequent skirmishing of the pickets with the advancing foe, as also by the division officer of the day, who reported the advance of a heavy force, was quickly formed behind the works and put in position for defense as far as practicable. Very soon the enemy's line advanced close up to the works and were greeted by a volley from our whole line. The action here was sharp and brief, the greatly superior force of the enemy enabling him not only to turn our left but also to effect an entrance between the First and Third Brigades. Being thus subject to enfilading fires as also to a direct fire from the front, these two brigades were driven from the works."

The report of Lieutenant-Colonel Thos. F. Wildes, One Hundred and Sixteenth Ohio, commanding the First Brigade, says :

"About 4 o'clock in the morning of the 19th of October, 1864, I heard brisk picket-firing on the right and left of the position occupied by my command. I immediately ordered the brigade under arms behind the fortifications. In a few minutes I heard a volley of perhaps twenty rifle shots and a yell as though a charge was being made in the direction of a picket post in front of my left. I at once directed Captain Karr, of my staff to inform Col. Thoburn that there was considerable firing along the picket line. I then went to the right of my command, to a position occupied by the third brigade, First Division, when I discovered that some pickets were coming in."

He then details movements before the command was forced out of the works, says he formed a line of his brigade on the hill overlooking the ravine in the rear ; moved his command to the pike, fighting to the right and front, and formed his brigade

with the Nineteenth Corps and fought till that corps and the Second Division of the Army of West Virginia withdrew.

He further says: "My command was in line of battle fully three-fourths of an hour before the attack was made, and the information was sent to division headquarters a half hour before the attack was made on my right."

The report of Captain Andrew Potter, in command of the Thirty-fourth Massachusetts of the First Brigade, says:

"About 4 A. M. the regiment was drawn up in line, and soon after picket firing was heard in the direction of the line occupied by the Fifth N. Y. H. A. In a very short time after the enemy was seen in front of the line of breastworks occupied by the first division, Dept. of W. Va., and the regiment immediately engaged in action with the enemy, who delivered a heavy fire into our front and on our right flank, opposite the position occupied by the 54 Pa. We continued our firing until the enemy were seen inside the breastworks of the 54 Pa., and also over the breastworks of the 5th N. Y. H. A., vacated by the regiment being on picket duty. Thus surrounded on our right and left, receiving a fire from the right, left and front, and the force on our right having retired, the order was given to retire and the regiment became scattered and broken."

Major H. Kellogg, commanding the One Hundred and Twenty-third Ohio, in his report says:

"We were alarmed about 4:30 o'clock in the morning by picket firing in our immediate front. The regiment was immediately formed behind the breastworks. After remaining a short time in line we were ordered to move by the right flank and occupy the works built by the 5th N. Y. H. A. We had hardly got into position before the regiments on our right were heavily engaged and men being driven back. After firing a few rounds we were ordered to move by left flank and occupy our own works." They formed with the brigade in the rear, as related by Colonel Wildes.

Captain John Suter, commanding the Fifty-fourth Pennsylvania, Third Brigade, in his report says :

"On the morning of the 19th, before daylight, when I was first apprised of picket firing on our front, I ordered the regiment to turn out under arms, which was done by the companies forming in their quarters and afterward marching to the breast-works in front. Before the line could be properly formed, the enemy, apparently in a mass, were observed advancing along the whole front, and already at the abatis. My regiment opened and maintained a fire until, the enemy getting in our rear from the extreme left of the line of works, were compelled to fall back." He says a portion of the regiment rallied in the skirt of woods in the camp, and disputed the advance of the enemy for a time.

Major Henry H. Withers, in command of the Tenth West Virginia, Third Brigade, says in his report :

"On the morning of the 19th I was, for some reason, very restless, and rose much earlier than usual ; had taken my seat in my tent and commenced eating my breakfast, when I heard several shots fired in tolerably quick succession ; thought, however, the pickets were disturbed by some unimportant event until I heard a volley fired apparently from the left, where the second division was fortified ; then almost immediately I heard a volley from our part of the fortifications, when, leaving my breakfast, I ran to the extreme right of the line, when I encountered an enfilading fire from the left, and found the men from my regiment throwing themselves down in the trenches and hurrying into the works * * * seeing I could not fire to the left for our own men * * * The regiment then marched double-quick to the foot of the hill below fortifications, where it was formed," etc.

Captain Van H. Bukey, commanding Eleventh West Virginia, in his report says :

"Near 5 A. M. the firing on the left alarmed my camp, and the men were quickly in line under arms at the works, immediately to the left of the battery on the extreme right of the line. When I arrived at the works I found some of my men firing to the front. * * * I ordered them to cease firing * * * I had not passed from left to right of my regiment, however, before the 15 W. Va., on my left, fell back from the works, and my flank received a pretty severe, but, owing to the fog and darkness, not accurate fire. My regiment then gave way by companies from the left obliquing to the right and rear down the hill. Moved "by right of companies to rear" having formed a perfect line (across ravine toward pike), formed column and filed to rear of left of 19th corps." His organization disappeared when the 19th corps fell back.

Lieutenant William Munk, of Battery D, First Pennsylvania, in his report says :

"On the morning of the 19th of October, 1864, at reveille, as was then the custom, my cannoneers went to their posts at the guns : presently several musket shots were heard in the direction of my front. This was the only intimation of an enemy near at hand until they were discovered advancing in line of battle not twenty yards from my battery. I immediately opened fire on them with cannister, firing some fifteen rounds, when the infantry supports on my left offering but little resistance, the enemy were enabled to reach the inside of the works, and after firing a volley charged the battery with fixed bayonets, and with clubbed muskets drove the cannoneers from their pieces."

Captain Henry A. Dupont, chief of artillery for Battery B, Fifth United States Artillery, reported as follows :

"Upon the sudden attack of the enemy before daylight on the morning of the 19th, First Lieut. Henry F. Brewerton, Fifth U. S. Artillery, who was in command of the battery, had the

men on the alert, and immediately ordered the guns to be loaded with cannister. * * * He succeeded in getting in a few shots in that direction (the left) from the two pieces of his center section. The infantry on the left then breaking and abandoning their works (which were at once occupied by the enemy), Lt. B. turned the two pieces of his left section upon them now within the works, and fired at them with cannister until they had advanced to within twenty-five paces of his guns, when he ceased firing and ran the pieces by hand down the hill to the caissons." One piece was lost.

Captain Frank Gibbs, of Battery I, First Ohio Battery, reports taking position and opening fire upon the enemy. He was farther from the parapet and had no difficulty in getting away with all his guns to do good service throughout the day.

Captain F. C. Wilkie, commanding battalion New York Heavy Artillery, of the First Brigade, in his report tells the fate of the pickets :

"The battalion was on picket in front of the 1st Division. About one hour before daylight some rebel cavalry appeared in front of the left of the lines, but, being fired upon, retired. That portion of the line then deployed as skirmishers. Shortly after, a column of the enemy crossed the creek on the right of the line, was fired upon by the pickets posted there, also by the small reserve, but they did not return the fire. The reserve fell back in skirmishing order, but were unable to check in the slightest degree the advance of the enemy. With the exception of about forty men capable of bearing arms the whole battalion was captured."

Thus embraced in this paper are extracts from the reports of the two brigade commanders, of six out of eight regimental commanders, of the officer in command of the pickets, and of every battery commander. The report of the other regimental commander is of the same tenor, substantially, as those given, but is omitted for want of space.

At the risk of tediousness these extended quotations have been given, so that the condition of things behind that parapet just before the attack and during the struggle may be told by eye witnesses, as well as the events upon the picket line.

From these witnesses, who can say with the hero of the siege of Troy, "All of which I saw and part of which I was," we learn that the pickets were on the alert and did their duty, and were nearly all captured; that the firing of the pickets alarmed the division; that every regiment and battery was under arms; the infantry at the works and the cannoneers at their guns; that a short but heroic resistance was maintained until the men at the breastworks were outflanked, right and left, and the center was penetrated; that every gun (but two) was in action and well served; that only seven guns out of sixteen were lost; that the left battery was fought until the cannoneers were bayoneted at their guns; that many of the regiments retired in good order, and so remained and fought until they were broken in the retiring of the Nineteenth Corps from the position at the pike under Gordon's assault; that the statements of the historians, civil and military, are false to facts, unjust and misleading, and especially that the pickets were not overcome by stratagem or deceit, but retired fighting manfully; and that the Rebel advance was not first announced by volleys fired into the slumbering camps of the Eighth Corps, but that this division was under arms to receive them.

To show that the approach of the Rebel line that foggy morning without discovery until they were within twenty paces is not to be attributed to the dullness or unwatchfulness of the men in those works, a quotation is inserted here from the report of Colonel T. W. Hyde, of First Maine, in Getty's Second Division of the Sixth Corps, concerning a Rebel charge after eight o'clock upon that division on the crescent-shaped ridge west of Middletown, as follows:

"The density of the fog had allowed them to rush over our videttes without their being able to warn the line, and under cover of the steepness of the hill they approached thus near (thirty paces) unobserved."

This testimony, as a whole, shows that the division was surprised and overpowered under circumstances entirely to their honor.

By way of corroboration, a quotation is now offered from Captain J. P. Sims, commanding the advance brigade of Ker-shaw's assaulting column. He says, narrating events from a point on the road between Strasburg and the ford:

"Here a halt was ordered until nearly five o'clock, when I was ordered to move down the road until the brigade had crossed over, and then turn down the creek and form in line of battle parallel to the creek, and to advance immediately to the front * * * to drive the enemy's pickets in without firing upon them, and not fire until the enemy's line was reached, all of which was strictly complied with * * * receiving the shots from the enemy's picket line without replying, but continuing to move forward with unbroken front through the volleys of musketry and cannon which they were now exposed to until they reached the enemy's works. The enemy made a stubborn resistance. Some of them were shot down while firing upon our men at the distance of a few feet."

If their enemy in arms is thus generous in his tribute to their valor, the friends of the Eighth Corps cannot afford to perpetuate an injustice.

The writer now desires to present something of the historical disagreement that grew up around that most dramatic incident of the day, never omitted, with its varied embellishments, by historians and popular writers who touch upon this battle, the renowned "Sheridan's Ride," its precedent, attendant and succeeding events, incidentally mentioning the fact that his rapid ride was limited to about ten miles rather than twenty, a cold

fact which takes away the most prominent feature of the celebrated poem.

The news of the battle was flashed over the land the next day, and on the 21st appeared in a hundred newspapers, and as many editorials set forth the idea of the battle derived from these first dispatches, and events occurred in so rapid succession that there was little time for correction of misstatements.

On the 21st of October, 1864, the following editorial appeared in the Dubuque Herald :

"Gen. Sheridan is a great chieftain. He brings order out of chaos, and changes a rout into a great victory. By the dispatches published to-day it will be seen that when Sheridan reached his army he found it in full retreat, hotly pursued by the victorious and exulting rebels. But he threw himself into the breach, reorganized his demoralized forces, turned them upon the enemy, and inflicted upon him a disastrous defeat. His achievement is unparalleled in the annals of war, and his skill in inditing dispatches should cause Pope and Hooker to look to their laurels. When, to use his own language, 'I take the matter in hand (myself) the Rebels must stand from under.' "

Notwithstanding the copper-head sneer, that was undoubtedly the impression produced by the telegraphic dispatches.

In the celebrated poem, "Sheridan's Ride," so often recited with dramatic effect, the same idea is brought out.

"The first the General saw were the groups
Of stragglers, and then the retreating troops.
What was done? What to do? A glance told him both.
Then striking his spurs, with a terrible oath,
He dashed down the line 'mid a storm of huzzas,
And the wave of retreat checked its course there, because
The sight of the master compelled it to pause."

The headlines of newspaper articles and a popular poem impress the masses rather than prosaic history. Popular magazine articles are not read critically by the average reader. Of

this character was an article published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1878, volume 42, page 687, by Major Crowningshield, of the First Massachusetts Cavalry, and another article by Captain J. Franklin Fitts, of the One Hundred and Fourteenth New York, in the *Galaxy*, volume 1, page 534, before alluded to. The former says, "Sheridan once up with his troops, stopped the retreat, reformed his line of battle." Captain Fitts says, "Their own (rebel) army must have needed some reorganization; ours was a chaotic mass of fragments, wandering in the woods, disheartened and bewildered, while the commanding officers were striving to bring order out of the confusion. To me the task seemed hopeless, impossible. That we had been beaten, and severely beaten, nobody could deny." Speaking of Sheridan's arrival he says, "The effects of his presence soon manifested themselves. There was a marching and aligning for 15 minutes and the chaos was reduced to order."

The hard-headed and reliable writer, Horace Greeley, in his history of the "American Conflict," says :

"Sheridan met his crest-fallen, shattered battalions without a word of reproach, but joyously, inspiringly, swinging his cap and shouting to the stragglers, as he rode rapidly past them, 'Face the other way! We are going back to our camps. We are going to lick them out of their boots!' Most of them obeyed, as the weaker will submit to the stronger. Then, having ordered each command to face to the front, form line and advance, he rode for two hours along that line gathering information and studying the ground."

These extracts embrace what may be called the radical pro-Sheridan view, which gives no credit to any other of the Union generals. But it is noticeable that few modern writers, civil or military, have taken this radical pro-Sheridan view.

If it is the wrong view, it is still being injuriously perpetuated through the schools, for we find Montgomery's *School History* using these words, page 315: "The retreat now became a

panic. Sheridan was at Winchester, about twenty miles away. He heard the cannon with their

— ‘terrible grumble and rumble and roar,
Telling the battle was on once more.’

Mounting his horse, he hurried to the scene of disaster. * * *
‘We must face the other way,’ shouted Sheridan to the *retreating men*. *They did face the other way,*” etc.

We find that from Fisk’s School History the boys and girls are learning that, “On one occasion, October 19th, while Sheridan was at Winchester, Early attacked his army at Cedar Creek, nearly twenty miles away. The Union Army was driven back about *seven miles*. Meanwhile Sheridan, who had heard the distant sound of cannon, was galloping at full speed toward the scene of action. As he approached the field and met *squads of fugitives* on the road he shouted, ‘Turn, boys, turn; we’re going back.’ *One and all rallied to his side, and defeat was turned into victory.*”

Let three corrections be made here.

1. Winchester was only eleven miles from the point where Sheridan found Getty’s Division and the cavalry and portions of other infantry corps in line facing the foe, instead of twenty miles.

2. The Union Army was never driven back seven miles. The Eighth Corps was about five miles from the parapets of the First Division; the Nineteenth Corps was about four miles back; half of the Sixth Corps was within two miles of its camps, and the cavalry had not been driven at all.

3. The retreat did not become a panic. It seems impossible, for writers of school histories even, to avoid the romantic and write soberly about this battle.

There is also the radical pro-Wright view, which accredits General Wright with having fought the battle with a masterly generalship; that he had not only established and reorganized the army on a new line, but had resolved to assume the offen-

sive and drive the Rebels across Cedar Creek. The supporters of this view are among military men as well as historians, although General Wight in his official report does not claim the intention to assume the offensive. But it is fairly to be inferred that he claimed to have established the new line and to have had his army practically formed on that line. He says in his report :

“Meanwhile the second division had taken up the position indicated, with the left resting on the pike. The Third and First were forming on the right, while on the Sixth Corps the Nineteenth was being formed. One or two very persistent attacks had been repulsed. About this time Major-General Sheridan came up and assumed command.”

Brigadier-General Getty, who was in command of the Sixth Corps when General Sheridan came up, says in his report :

“On retiring from the position (on the crest west of Middletown) I sent orders to the commanders of the First and Third Divisions to conform to the movements of the Second, and when this division (2nd) was halted the First and Third were brought up and placed on the right, the Third holding the center and the First the right of the corps line. General Sheridan reached the field between 11 and 12 o'clock.”

Colonel J. Warren Keifer, in command of the Third Division, in his report says :

“From this position (the same) the division was moved under orders to the left and formed connection with the second division, Sixth Corps. * * * It was known about 10:30 A. M. that Major-General Sheridan had arrived.”

Colonel R. B. Hayes, afterwards President, then in command of the Second Division of the Eighth Corps, said to the Ohio Commandery of the Loyal Legion about 1888, correcting General Sheridan as to the condition of the Eighth Corps when he arrived :

“The fact is that first came Getty's Division, and then mine, and then came Gen'l Keifer's division, all lying down behind

barricades and in good condition, except that there had been some loss in the morning. Gen'l Keifer was next to me, and then came the rest of the Sixth Corps, and farther down I have no doubt the 19th Corps was in line."

With all these officers, General Sheridan and a host of writers disagree as to the presence on that line of any troops to the right of Getty's Division, but the testimony seems to show that Hayes' men were there, and one-half of Keifer's Third Division, but not the other half of the Third Division of the Sixth Corps, nor the First Division, nor the Nineteenth Corps, which were a thousand yards to the rear, and the Nineteenth, twelve hundred yards to the right.

It is noticeable that every writer consulted who was in the Sixth Corps makes these strong claims for General Wright, their corps commander.

The author of "Three Years in the Sixth Corps," Dr. Stevens, of the Seventy-seventh New York, says:

"With this new line of battle in the strong position we now held, Gen'l Wright determined that not only should the retreat be stopped here, but the rebels should be driven back across Cedar Creek. Their career of victory was ended. The grand old Sixth Corps, directed by our own loved General Getty, had turned the fortunes of the day. It was now 10 o'clock; far away in the rear we heard cheer after cheer. What was the cause? Were reënforcements coming? Yes; Phil Sheridan was coming, and he was a host."

The author of "Vermont in the Civil War," G. C. Benedict, volume, 1, gives substantially the same view.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. C. Starr, of the Ninth West Virginia, read a paper to the Loyal Legion of Indiana in 1891, in which he alleged that when Sheridan arrived "He found order restored, our stragglers brought back, cartridges refilled, wounded taken care of, and strategy matured by Gen. Crook for the battle that was to occur in the afternoon, as indicated by Crook's

reply to Sheridan's salutation, viz.: 'We can take the offensive from this point and retake our camps this afternoon.''' Doubtless General Crook said that. Captain J. N. Patton, of Des Moines, who, with Major William McKinley, now president, was on Crook's staff that day, says that before Sheridan came he heard General Crook urge General Wright to advance, and predicted that the move would be a success because the Rebels were pillaging our camps and demoralized, and that he believes that had Crook had command he would have done it.

Captain Patton carried the information of the attack from General Crook, at Bell Grove, to General Wright at his headquarters across Meadow Run that morning, and, while he does not understand how the General could have been where he claims to have been beyond the pike with Hayes' Division, he thinks, from what he saw of him that day, that he was not "rattled," but acted with judgment and military sagacity.

The pro-Wright views given herein, which leave Sheridan nothing to do after his arrival but to carry out General Wright's design of advancing, are given in the following historical works: "The Civil War in America," Draper, volume 3, page 413; "The Civil War," Lossing, volume 3, page 369; Johnson's Universal Cyclopedia; American supplement to Encyclopedia Britannica; Pollard's "Lost Cause" (Rebel), page 599.

A third class of writers take a middle ground, and while they by no means accord to General Sheridan credit for stopping a retreating army, and allege that the retreat had ended, and the danger point had been passed, do not withhold from General Wright the credit of having directed the grand tactics of the battle whereby the left of the army was withdrawn from the clutches of the Rebels, and of having established a safe line for defense, with, as some say, the troops that were not yet on that line in process of forming on it, only prevented by a tactical error committed through losing sight of forces on their right hidden by intervening woods.

These writers credit Sheridan with completing the formation already begun, and making changes in the distribution of the cavalry, with formulating the resolution to advance, and inspiring a dispirited army with enough of his own sublime courage to "snatch victory from the jaws of defeat."

These writers are both from civil and military life, the military writers having been in the battle. The following quotation from the report of Brevet Major-General W. H. Emory, of the Nineteenth Corps, is given, showing that his last movements before General Sheridan arrived were in obedience to Wright's design for the whole army to take position upon the line on which Sheridan found Getty, and that he finally reached his position after Sheridan arrived, and in obedience also to his orders. He says, speaking of the position at the Old Forge Road: "Here I ordered the Nineteenth to halt and form in line of battle. My first line was already in position when I was directed to retire inclining to the left and connecting with the Sixth Corps. I, however, ordered my skirmishers to hold the crest until they should receive instructions from me to abandon it. Losing sight of the Sixth Corps shortly afterward, in consequence of a sudden change of direction in the line of march, I ordered the Nineteenth back to the vicinity of the crest, and sent aides de camp to find the right of the Sixth Corps. I also extended my line over a portion of the unoccupied interval on my left in order to check the turning movement of the enemy who were deploying in that direction. While thus engaged, I received a message from General Sheridan directing me to close up to the Sixth Corps, etc., etc. Pushing to the left about three-quarters of a mile, I joined the Sixth Corps." *

General A. Bayard Nettleton, then colonel of the Second Ohio Cavalry, in a paper read before the Loyal Legion of

*It may be mentioned as a matter of interest to Iowa people that the following Iowa regiments were rendering efficient service in this battle, viz.: Twenty-second, in Second Brigade, Twenty-fourth and Twenty-eighth in Fourth Brigade, Second Division, Nineteenth Corps.

Minnesota, said : "At noon and for some time previously the enemy was opposed only by Merritt's and Custer's Cavalry and Getty's Division and batteries, while the main portion of the Sixth Corps was more than two miles to the right and rear of Getty, engaged in reorganizing, and the Nineteenth Corps was to the right and rear of the Sixth." He says further of Sheridan, "He sent galloping orders to the Sixth and Nineteenth Corps to hasten up to our support."

To the same general effect that Sheridan ordered at least one-half the Sixth Corps and all the Nineteenth Corps up from a very considerable distance to the rear, the writer might quote at length from Richard B. Irwin, of General Emory's staff, in his "History of the Nineteenth Corps"; J. W. De Forest, also of General Emory's staff, in an article in Harper's Magazine of April, 1865; Major G. A. Forsythe, who was on General Sheridan's staff, and made the ride with him that day, in an article in Harper's Magazine of July, 1897; F. H. Buffum, in his "History of the Fourteenth New Hampshire," the writer's own regiment; Charles Carlton Coffin, in his "Freedom Triumphant," page 49; Harper's History of the Civil War; Nicolay and Hay's "Abraham Lincoln," volume 9, page 323; Major H. M. Pollard, Eighth Vermont, on the staff of General Dwight, First Division, Nineteenth Corps, in "Recollections of Cedar Creek," published by Missouri Loyal Legion, volume 1, of "Personal Recollections," page 278.

These quotations will, however, be closed with Sheridan's own words from his Memoirs, volume 2, page 82 :

"When nearing the valley pike just south of Newtown, I saw about three-fourths of a mile west of the pike a body of troops, which proved to be Ricket's and Wheaton's Divisions of the Sixth Corps, and then learned that the Nineteenth Corps had halted a little to the right and rear of these. * * * Continuing on parallel with the pike about midway between Newtown and Middletown I crossed to the west of it, and a little later

came up in the rear of Getty's Division of the Sixth Corps. When I arrived, this division and the cavalry were the only troops in the presence of and resisting the enemy ; they were apparently acting as a rear guard. * * * Getty's Division when I found it was about a mile north of Middletown."

As before stated, there is substantial evidence of the presence of one brigade of the Third Division and twelve hundred of Crook's men. General Sheridan did not go down the line to the west far enough to distinguish them from the Second Division.

He says farther on : "I had already decided to attack the enemy from that line as soon as I could get matters in shape to take the offensive. Crook met me at this time and strongly favored my idea of attacking. * * * Gen'l Wright came up later. * * * Wright gave me a hurried account of the day's events and when told we would fight the enemy on the line which Getty and the cavalry were holding, and that he must go himself and send all his staff to bring up the troops, he zealously fell in with the scheme ; and it was *then* that the Nineteenth and two divisions of the Sixth were ordered to the front from where they had halted to the right and rear of Getty."

When the statements of actors in these historical scenes are so contradictory, it is not surprising that historians are equally at variance in their versions of the affair.

To the great majority of readers these contradictions are exceedingly perplexing, and the conclusion is almost inevitable that some have blundered or colored their statements for a purpose.

After prolonged and patient study of the official records and semi-official accounts by participants, the writer is unable to reconcile the reports of Generals Wright and Getty and Colonel Keifer to the effect that the new line was fully formed and ready, with the statements of General Emory, De Forest and Irwin of his staff, and Major Forsythe of Sheridan's, staff and of

General Sheridan himself, to the effect that the greater part of the Sixth Corps and the Nineteenth Corps were from one thousand yards to two miles to the rear and right of the troops in line north of Middletown when Sheridan came up, to be yet brought up by him, except upon the hypothesis that Wright, Getty and Keifer regarded their advance to that line as the completion of a tactical move ordered by General Wright, accidentally interrupted by the excusable failure to connect with Getty's Division as they marched to the rear through woodland, a closing up which would have occurred about as it did at all events.

This view exonerates all these brave and heroic men from blame and from any suspicion of "doctoring" their reports.

Between the views of those whom we may, without intending to be offensive, call the partisans of General Wright, the theory of complete reorganization of an army not demoralized or routed in fact, with the present ability and intention to advance, and the other view of the early writers who were partisans of General Sheridan, there is a broad difference. But it seems to the writer that the preponderance of testimony must govern, which will assign the truth to the middle ground honorable to both. "*In medias res tutissimus ibis*," or, you go safest in the middle of the road.

Therefore we conclude that the evidence goes to show, on the one hand, that though the army was surprised before daylight and was driven back after a stubborn resistance, or went back for tactical reasons, it was not routed, nor did the hero of the day ride but a fraction over one-half of the "twenty miles" of the poem.

It goes to show, on the other hand, that though the army was practically intact, it was not yet completely reformed when Sheridan arrived, and to advance is not shown to have entered into General Wright's plans, although while it has been stated in some quarters that he was organizing the army for further

retreat, he does say in his report, "that there was no intention of retreating the soldiers who stood fire clearly understood."

It goes to show that though the poem, "Sheridan's Ride," and various historical statements are "figments of the brain," as to time, distance and all details, the true story of the day will reveal Sheridan in a grand and admirable role, which, for the permanence of his well deserved fame won on many other fields, needs no exaggeration of his achievements at the expense of others.

With great satisfaction the writer quotes the autograph letter of President Lincoln :

EXECUTIVE MANSION, WASHINGTON, Oct. 22, 1864.

MAJOR-GENERAL SHERIDAN :

With great pleasure I tender to you and your brave army the thanks of the Nation, and my own personal admiration and gratitude, for the month's operations in the Shenandoah Valley, and especially for the splendid work of October 19, 1864.

Your ob't servant,

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

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